

# Browncroft Crier

The Official Newsletter of the Browncroft Neighborhood Association

Since 1973

P.O. BOX 10127 - ROCHESTER, NEW YORK 14610

JANUARY 1989

FEBRUARY 7th

## YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY --- IN SLIDES

*Did you ever wonder where the Duck Pond was? The dovecote 25 feet high? What did the house just north of the Rose Garden look like in 1914? (There were barns beside it). Who was Charles Brown and why did he start a nursery and later a subdivision in our area? Can more than 300 slides really be shown in an hour? For answers and more questions, save the date of February 7th.*

*"Browncroft, a Neighborhood History" a slide show depicting the history of our area, will be shown on Tuesday February 7th at 7:00 pm at the Winton Road Library. The program is sponsored by the Browncroft Neighborhood History Committee, which is looking for new members with new ideas. Volunteers, call Sharon Bloemendaal, 288-6359, or 924-4040, ext. 428; or Betty O'Brien 654-9727*

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

FEB 6: BNA Board of Directors Meeting 7:30pm

FEB 7: Historical Browncroft slide presentation at 7pm at Winton Road Branch Library.

MAR 6: BNA Executive Committee Meeting at 7:30pm.

MAR 14: BNA General Meeting - Emmanuel Covenant Church at 7:30pm "How to Run a Successful Garage Sale"

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Neighbors,

I was pleased to note the presence of several new Browncroft residents at our Annual Holiday Buffet. This was a festive affair enjoyed by all who attended. Many thanks to Pam Dalton and her committee for handling the arrangements.

Scarcely a month goes by without someone asking me about our Browncroft Neighborhood Garage Sale. This is held every two years and is certainly a popular affair. The dates of May 6th and 7th have been set for the sale. If you'd like a little coaching on how to conduct your sale and perhaps even some advice on pricing plan to attend our March 14th General Meeting which will cover this subject. See you there.

## CITY LIVING FOR 75 YEARS!

Browncroft was annexed to Rochester on January 1, 1914. This past New Year's Day, Browncroft celebrated the 75th anniversary of its annexation to the city of Rochester. Before 1914, Browncroft was a part of Brighton.

In 1919, Browncroft was a part of Brown Brothers Nursery. Charles J. Brown, President of Brown Bros. Co. (Nursery) and Browncroft Realty Corp., lived with his wife, Dora at 540 Winton Road North. Brown also served as County Treasurer.

In 1927, Browncroft was known for its beautiful landscaping. According to the April 10th D&C, "Intelligent landscaping has given Browncroft a nationwide reputation as one of the most beautiful residential developments."

In 1946, Browncroft formed its first Neighborhood Association. On June 11, 1946, the property owners of the Browncroft Tract formed a permanent organization of property owners.

In 1975, Browncroft and School #46 began 5 years of Community School Nights. This was a series of 5 nights where neighborhood experts volunteered to teach informal classes in a variety of areas and crafts.

In 1978, the weather co-operated to help create an enjoyable afternoon on June 25th in the Browncroft neighborhood. The versatile and talented Monroe County Parks Band played marches and show tunes while the audience of about 300 people relaxed at School 46 playground. The concert was preceded by a kiddie parade with prizes for the most original costumes. Winners were Ted and Matt Richards for age 4 and under; Jason Knight, ages 5-8; and Stephen Carlisle, ages 9-12.

In 1980, Browncroft saw its first tour of neighborhood Rose Gardens. On June 15 at least 100 people stopped by the Browncroft Rose Garden to pick up guide sheets listing the yards which were open for display. Neighbors were able to visit gardens in whatever order they wished and at their own pace.

In 1981, Browncroft held its first neighborhood-wide garage sale with over 100 participating households

## A RELIC OF PAST IN BROWNCROFT

--by Arch Merrill  
D&C 1966

This story, involving an unusual iron post and a residential tract, was inspired by the curiosity of a visiting New Yorker.

Arthur Ohlman, a recent guest at the home of his son, Herman, at 90 Windemere Rd., was intrigued by the 10-foot post at the intersection of Windemere and Newcastle Roads in Browncroft.

Ohlman, an illustrator and writer, detected the distinctive, ornamental features of the relic under its heavy coat of rust. In a note to this newspaper, enclosed a sketch he made, he described "the fanciful design and curious Gothic lettering," spelling out "Browncroft," on all four sides of the pole.

He wondered what purpose the pole had served and expressed deep interest in the history of Browncroft.

Had not some vandal or collector removed the street signs which once adorned the top of the pole, its function

would have been obvious. It is the last of the scores which stood at every street corner of the large residential tract.

In 1914 Charles J. Brown began laying out Browncroft as one of the most elaborate and decorative residential subdivisions in Rochester's annals.

It is on the site of the old Brown Brothers Nursery, once one of the city's largest, and founded in 1885 by C. J. Brown and his brother, Robert, who died in 1900.

Always active in civic and political circles, Charles J. Brown, a one time president of the Chamber of Commerce, served as Republican county chairman and county treasurer among other posts.

With his son-in-law, George J. Kaelber, as secretary and his right-handman, he formed the Browncroft Realty Corp., which laid out the tract which became a Rochester showplace. The original plot was bounded by North Winton Road, Browncroft Boulevard, Blossom Road and Newcastle Road and comprise more than 300 acres.

Browncroft was landscaped on a scale hitherto unprecedented here with lavish planting of ornamental trees, including many blue spruce; with parkways and berry shrubs, and with flower beds and rose bushes between the curbs and sidewalks. Wisteria vines climbed the ornamental street signs.

The large lots on the wide avenues sold rapidly and were soon dotted with big substantial homes, reflecting the character of their owners. The monotonous sardine-can-like uniformity of many modern subdivisions in the suburbs was not part of the Browncroft pattern. There frame, brick and stucco residences are intermingled

In the late 1920's, a 200 acre extension was developed to the east of the original plot, extending beyond the present Sea Breeze Expressway.

Many will remember the pretty pond which once adjoined the Charles Brown mansion, now a rest home, at North Winton and Corwin Roads. C. J. Brown passed away in 1930.

After the development of Browncroft, the nursery business was continued, with the founder's son, Donald C., as president. After several years in the Merchants Road area, the firm moved to Penfield.

Soon after Donald Brown's death in 1961, the Penfield farm was sold and Brown Bros. Nursery went the way of many others in the Flower City.

Another son of Charles J., Leland C. Brown, who was vice-president of the nursery firm and headed its seed subsidiary, now lives in retirement on Superior Road, Penfield. I am indebted to this friendly gentleman for much of the data in this story.

Although Browncroft has lost some of the floral and park-like embellishments of its early years, the big, imposing houses remain and it is still a distinctive and attractive residential section.

## BROWNCROFT CRIER WRAP UP

Suggestions on articles or items of interest can be submitted to Bob Genthner at 195 Newcastle Road or to EDITOR BROWNCROFT CRIER, P.O. Box 10127, Rochester, New York 14610. The next BROWNCROFT CRIER dead line is expected to be February 14th.